Indicators of Effective Practice (District)
Center on Innovation & Improvement

Effective Practices and Indicators for District Support of School Improvement

Adapted from *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*
See the *Handbook* sources for explication and underlying research.
Downloadable from: www.centerii.org

I. District Context and Support for School Improvement

Effective Practice: The district provides a framework of district improvement and support for school improvement.

Indicators of Effective Practice
1. The district includes municipal and civic leaders in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
2. The district includes community organizations in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
3. The district includes parent organizations in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
4. The district provides incentives for staff who work effectively in hard-to-staff and restructuring schools.
5. The district contracts with external service providers for key services in restructured schools.
6. The district provides schools with technology, training, and support for integrated data collection, reporting, and analysis systems.
7. The district sets district, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.
8. The school board and superintendent present a unified vision for school improvement.
9. The superintendent and other central office staff are accountable for school improvement and student learning outcomes.
10. The district regularly reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.
11. The district ensures that key pieces of user-friendly data are available in a timely fashion at the district, school, and classroom levels.
12. The district intervenes early when a school is not making adequate progress.
13. The district works with the school to provide early and intensive intervention for students not making progress.
14. The district recruits, trains, supports, and places personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement.
15. The district allows school leaders reasonable autonomy to do things differently in order to succeed.

II. The Change Process

Effective Practice: The district takes the change process into account in planning and supporting school improvement.

Indicators of Effective Practice
1. The district operates with district-level and school-level improvement teams.
2. The district examines existing school improvement strategies being implemented across the district and determines their value, expanding, modifying, and culling as evidence suggests.
3. For each restructuring school, the district makes reference to guidance from *What Works When* regarding how to assess what the best restructuring options are given its unique district and school context.
4. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring options chosen reflect the particular strengths and weaknesses of the restructuring school.

5. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring plan reflects the resources available to ensure its success.
6. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring plan includes both changes in governance and a detailed plan for school improvement.
7. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include research-based, field-proven programs, practices, and models.
8. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include a clear vision of what the school will look like when restructured or substantially improved.
9. The district ensures that an empowered change agent (typically the principal) is appointed to head each restructuring school.
10. In restructuring schools, the district ensures that the change agent (typically the principal) is skilled in motivating staff and the community, communicating clear expectations, and focusing on improved student learning.
11. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include "quick wins," early successes in improvement.
12. The district is prepared for setbacks, resistance, and obstacles on the path to substantial improvement.
13. The school reports and documents its progress monthly to the superintendent, and the superintendent reports the school's progress to the school board.

III. District-School Expectations

Effective Practice: The district clarifies what it expects from the school and what the school can expect from the district.

Indicators of Effective Practice
1. The district designates a central office contact person for the school, and that person maintains close communication with the school and an interest in its progress.
2. District and school decision makers meet at least twice a month to discuss the school's progress.
3. District policies and procedures clarify the scope of site-based decision making granted a school and are summarized in a letter of understanding.
4. The district provides a cohesive district curriculum guide aligned with state standards or otherwise places curricular expectation on the school.
5. The district provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school's data management needs.
6. Professional development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting training and consultation that fit the requirements of its improvement/restructuring plan and its evolving needs.
7. Staff development is built into the schedule for support staff (e.g., aides, clerks, custodians, cooks) as well as classroom teachers.
8. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.
9. All teams have written statements of purpose and by-laws for their operation.
10. The school's Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.